

THE INSTITUTE FOR CANCER RESEARCH

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Dr. William D. Terry
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Dear Bill:

As I noted on the telephone it was impossible for us to respond to your request within two weeks. Now we have accomplished this and enclose our response.

I would like to reiterate some of my general comments on the matter of guidelines. It is understandably difficult not to refer to our own position, because the proposed guidelines would greatly weaken, even cripple, our Center, contrary to the Congressional mandate that support grants should strengthen Cancer Centers, as indeed ours has done. We like to think that our previous contributions to cancer research are such that weakening our Center constitutes a weakening of the National Cancer Program too. We are proud of the fact that those scientists, 36 in number, supported by our core grant include five members of the National Academy of Sciences. We are also proud of the priority score of 152 that the last renewal of our support grant received.

As you will see from the enclosed report our total grant would now be limited by formula to \$967,630 instead of its present \$2,713,968. Limitation of the amount applied for has never been a feature of supporting grants, although we have always accepted the idea that the amount awarded might be limited. If we were to expend the entire amount of allowable funds under the new guidelines on shared resources and services, we could maintain our present level of support for that category, leaving nothing for investigators, administration, or development.

That would leave us with the problem of finding a new source for personnel. Of course, we would ask each investigator to request 100 per cent of his or her salary on individual research grants currently awarded from NIH, NSF, or ACS. Since about 90 per cent of our grant requests are actually funded, I suspect we would be successful. But such a shift would cause a substantial problem with morale. The supporting grant has acted for us in much the same way that state or large endowment funds do for other institutions, but with no compromise of standards; in fact, the salaries of investigators

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are only awarded to those who hold peer-reviewed grants. The recruitment of new young investigators would surely be affected. There would also be a strongly negative effect upon our attempts to develop new programs, especially at that delicate interface between basic and clinical research. In viewing the chaos created for us, will subsequent reviewers believe that the new guidelines were designed to strengthen institutions that are striving to contribute to the conquest of cancer?

This crippling of our core support arises because of two key points in the new guidelines. The first has to do with the fact that the maximum amount of a supporting grant is now determined by a formula, and that the formula is geared to NCI grants and contracts. As you know some of the most promising cancer research at ICR, including that of Beatrice Mintz and Robert Perry, is supported by other agencies. I hope that you and Dr. DeVita feel, as I do, that it is from such directions that the most far-reaching new developments will come, as they have already done in the case of Baruch Blumberg, our Nobel Laureate whose early research was supported by other Institutes.

The second has to do with the limit on salaries of investigators. This is a more academic issue in view of the paralyzing effect of the first limitation. Salary support has been the main part of our supporting grant for 18 years. We have been conservative in this matter and strong proponents of the idea that investigators without peer-reviewed grants should not be so supported. On the other hand, we do not request support for administration and new research projects. Other Centers have other needs, but these for the most part are not compromised by the new guidelines. It seems to us therefore that the changes are selectively discriminating against those Centers that have been helped by support of the mainstays of the Cancer Program, the principal investigators themselves.

We understand that there may be a limitation on funds available for supporting grants. If it develops that approved grants total \$75 million and the funds available are \$60 million, a 20 per cent reduction for all grants would be rational. It would obviously cause our institution some difficulty, but nothing like the 64 per cent reduction that the new guidelines would impose upon us.

We are not asking for favored treatment. We are believers in the peer-review process and are in fact eager to have Centers so reviewed rather than have them squeezed into a formula concerned more with homogeneity than quality.

Sincerely yours,



Alfred G. Knudson, Jr.
Director

AGK:in
enclosure